

October 13, 2004

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Carl Levin
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warner and Senator Levin:

We write regarding concerns raised in recent press reports about the military's anthrax vaccination program at Dover Air Force Base. The concerns were raised by the former wing commander at Dover AFB, Colonel Felix Grieder. We believe that a thorough investigation of the program's history and current practice at Dover AFB by the Armed Services Committee is needed.

The importance of clearing the air on this issue cannot be overstated. For that reason, we have also asked the Department of Defense and the GAO to look into these reports. It is in the best interests of everyone for there to be well-documented and readily available information regarding the necessity of the anthrax vaccine, the presence or absence of squalene, and the possible health effects associated with the vaccine and given amounts of squalene. It is critical to the credibility of the U.S. Air Force that the concerns raised by a former wing commander be reviewed in an open and transparent fashion. The controversy surrounding the history of the anthrax vaccine at Dover AFB creates a drag on morale and concerns among personnel at a time when all of their energy should be devoted to their vital missions.

As part of resolving this issue, we would like to know the results of the research we understand the Department has done on the effects of squalene in vaccines. In addition, it is important to explain the rationale for the Army's decision to seek a patent for a new anthrax vaccine that includes squalene. What is the status of that vaccine's development and testing? In the case of squalene, what is the scientific basis being used by the military for deciding that there are no harmful effects resulting from the introduction of a foreign element into the human body, even if that element is already present in the body?

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Our goal is clear up this matter as expeditiously as possible. We hope that a Committee hearing or investigation will ensure that we have all the facts regarding what occurred at Dover AFB, what the Department is doing to ensure that there is not a repeat of these problems, and how the Department is ensuring accountability. We would also welcome the Committee's thoughts on whether additional outside review of the vaccine's safety by a respected non-governmental agency would be beneficial. In light of the fact that the mandatory anthrax vaccination program is being restarted and expanded, we believe it is essential that the Committee address the questions and concerns raised in the press as quickly as possible.

As the Committee looks into these matters, please contact us or have your staff contact Erin Logan of Senator Biden's staff and Sean Barney of Senator Carper's staff to get more details regarding our concerns. For your information we have attached copies of the recent relevant press stories. We look forward to your Committee's assistance in dealing with these concerns and to working with you to ensure the health and well-being of our military personnel.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator